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Ministry of Advanced Education

$4.15M HELPS ABORIGINAL STUDENTS ACCESS LANGUAGES

VICTORIA – For the fourth straight year, the Province has increased funding to help Aboriginal students access the education they want and succeed in their post-secondary goals, Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell announced today.

"The Aboriginal special projects fund gives Aboriginal students the opportunities they want to pursue so that education is meaningful, inspiring and rewarding to their communities at large," said Coell. "This year, an additional $1.15 million is going towards the development of language curriculum and resources that will help First Nations revitalize the cultural knowledge and history of their peoples for generations to come."

The fund is increasing from $2 million to $4.15 million, $1.15 million of which is specified for language curriculum. The increased funding is supporting 50 new and continuing projects at 21 public post-secondary institutions across the province, 14 of which are language oriented. Since 2001, the Province has provided more than $15 million in funding to 272 special projects benefiting over 4,700 Aboriginal students.

As part of the ministry's Aboriginal post-secondary education strategy, the special projects fund provides up to $100,000 to public post-secondary institutions to work with Aboriginal communities and educators on projects that address the government's education priorities in language, culture and history, adult basic education, teacher training, health sciences, math, sciences and the trades.

New projects this year include curriculum development for an introductory course on the indigenous languages of southern Vancouver Island at Camosun College. The goal is to inspire students' interest in ancestral languages while encouraging respect for the languages of the territories where they live. Another project being developed at the British Columbia Institute of Technology is giving 12 Nisga'a Nation students the chance to learn how to film and edit videos through the FilmFLEX program. This expertise will help the nation in its ongoing preservation of the Nisga'a culture and history.

"The special projects fund has allowed tremendous collaboration to happen between Aboriginal communities, educators and our public institutions," said Coell. "By listening to Aboriginal people in the communities about the programs and courses they want, more are encouraged to start on their path to education."

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In April, Premier Gordon Campbell announced the Province's $65-million Aboriginal post-secondary strategy to meet the higher learning commitments in the Transformative Change Accord and close the gap in the area of education opportunities between First Nations and other British Columbians.

Project descriptions are available online at:
http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/aboriginal/documents/aspf-project-summaries-0708.pdf

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